Reflections

Sunday May 31, 2020

Dying in Minnesota

The death of George Floyd has me angry / bewildered / confused. How could this happen? “Minnesota nice” is a real thing and the actions of one policeman, complicate with three officers has ripped another blindfold from my eyes that I wasn’t conscious was there. It’s painful to be alive these days.

The destruction in Minneapolis is staggering. Approximately four square miles has been burned or looted. It will take a generation for this to heal both physically and socially.

Our dearly loved next door neighbors called last night to say that the smoke was thick in our neighborhood from the burning buildings. And, you could hear explosions. Katie lived through the LA riots as a young child and was reliving the trauma of it all over again. So, she packed up her three kids and headed out to Greensboro, NC to live with friends for the summer. Husband will follow with the dog as soon as he buttons up the house.

My nephew, Ben and his wife Jill are now home to his brother and girlfriend. Jake and Talia live in the Phillips neighborhood just two blocks off Lake Street, the epicenter for the riots. When they left, there was a burning car in front of Jake’s apartment.

Ben described traveling with Jake on bicycles during the day. “You’d be amazed at how people, block by block, were out supporting and caring for each other.” They saw impromptu gatherings of people helping each other board up stores and homes. They were accumulating fire extinguishers into central locations to be available by all if needed. People set up tables sharing food and baby supplies.

At night, it is another story. Anne’s sister works for the city of Minneapolis. Joan says that at night, the city changes after the 8:00 p.m. curfew. “My coworkers has said they observed about 1/3 of the protesters wearing white hoods or Nazi insignia. They are not from here. They are the ones taking the lead in destroying minority businesses.” Watch for more of this developing story.

In COVID-19 news, my adopted Aunt Norleen has been staying in Mankato’s Oaklawn Nursing home. The director and five key staffers all tested positive for asymptomatic COVID-19. The residents never had a chance. One wing has been converted into hospice and Norleen moved there four days ago. She doesn’t have much longer. Anne and I had a chance to talk to her and say our goodbyes. Now 91, she became a nun at the age of 13. Norleen left the School Sisters of Notre Dame and became Mayo Health System’s chief development officer for 15 years before retiring. She was famous for her directness. Seeing Norleen about six months after our wedding, she greeted us with “I can tell you two are very happy.” Yes. We are. How can you tell that, Aunt Norlean? “You’ve both gained weight!” Yep. It was true. Thanks for pointing THAT out.

Our daughter-in-law, Leah Grover, has a grandfather in the same situation. 95 and living in St. Theresa's nursing home where he and 46 other residents contracted COVID-19. He is also in hospice.

All this is to say that the work we do is now more critically important than ever before. Our free meditations, Masterclasses, DEC, online courses and new Virtual Retreats all bring the knowledge that we are more than our physical body. How do we make it through? Sometimes we need another perspective and taking control of our responses to events. We are very good at teaching that. As the English say:

Graph from Charleene's presentation
(Recommended by Susan Smily)

I think of the others and see how to help them
I make my talents available to those who need them
I start to give up what I can't control
I stop compulsively consuming what hurts me, from food to news
I live in the present and focus on the future
I grab food, toilet paper and medications that I don't need
I identify my emotions
I am empathetic with myself and with others
I spread emotions related to fear and anger
Who do I want to be during COVID-19?
FEAR ZONE
LEARNING ZONE
GROWTH ZONE
I complain frequently
I become aware of the situation and think how to act
I thank and appreciate others
I forward all messages I receive
I keep a happy emotional state and spread hope
I evaluate information before spreading something false
I get mad easily
I look for a way to adapt to new changes
I recognize that we are all trying to do our best
I practice quietude, patience, relationships and creativity

Over the weekend, this came in and it spoke to me. I hope you find inspiration in them, too.

A small organization isn't simply a little version of a big organization
Fewer meetings, fewer resources, fewer constraints.
The biggest advantage that a small organization has is that the employees can look customers in the eye.
And vice versa.
Instead of policies, groupthink and leverage, the way forward for a small organization might be the very thing that fueled you in the start: find out what people need and help them get it. Right away.
It's never been easy to be a small organization and it's even more difficult right now.
But resilience and flexibility go together.
The first rule remains: figure out what people need and bring it to them.

~Seth Godin

Attached to this email is the operations report I sent to the Board of Directors this morning. It's breathtaking in its activity and accomplishments. Take a bow.

See you Monday.
Scott